



*Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Wellington*

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CHRISTMAS GIVING COMES FULL CIRCLE

Marines from the US Embassy have today delivered an early Christmas present to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. The grant of \$15,000 is the initial funding for a permanent exhibition to be created for Old St Paul's that will tell the story of U.S. Marines in Wellington region and the Pacific during World War II.

"Thousands of young marines experienced the safety and hospitality of New Zealand when they were on leave from the perils of war in the Pacific and it is important to us to preserve the memory of that time in our shared history for present and future generations," says Gunnery Sergeant James Sheppard, Marine Detachment Commander.

Memorial flags of the 2nd Battalion and United States from this period still hang in the church and Sheppard said that Old St. Paul's seemed an appropriate place to keep that memory alive.

"During their time in Wellington 1942 - 44 many Marines went to church at Old St Paul's, they spent Christmases there and were welcomed by parishioners. This Christmas we still remember New Zealanders generosity to those Marines," said Sheppard.

Today Old St Paul's is visited by up to 80,000 visitors a year, many of them school children and tourists and Ambassador McCormick hopes the Embassy's gift will add to their experience.

"Since I've been here I've learned how important national identity is to New Zealanders and maintaining your history contributes to that. The NZ Historic Places Trust does a fantastic job and I hope our gift enhances the work that they are doing on behalf of all New Zealanders," said the Ambassador.

The NZ Historic Places Trust now has a campaign underway where members of the public can contribute to creating this exhibition.

"Inspired by this valuable contribution we will now embark on a further fund raising campaign to develop the Marine's exhibition. This project marks the beginning of the redevelopment of the entire visitor experience at Old St Paul's," says Ann Neil the Central Region Manager of the Historic Places Trust.

